

March 13, 2012

General Assembly
Labor and Public Employees Committee
Room 3800, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: S.B. 352 – AN ACT CREATING A PROCESS FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS TO COLLECTIVELY BARGAIN WITH THE STATE

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

I am Carolyn Thompson, a family child care provider in Bridgeport of 27 years. I take care of children before and after school, all day children, and toddlers. I have been working with Care 4 Kids before it was Care 4 Kids. It used to be called the Connecticut Child Care Assistance Program. I have seen it all.

As a family day care provider, my day consist of making sure the children sleep enough for their age, eat what is appropriate for their bodies to grow healthy, and provide a stimulating environment. My children love to eat home cooked meals, and have structure in their lives, which is essential for the brain's development. From the time they come through my door, I provide a safe haven for them. I provide love, care, nurturing, and education. Being that I have such a pivotal influence in a child's life, I very much dislike taking hours out of my day to deal with the C4K program.

I think C4K needs to improve their communications with the providers and the parents. They are too slow and it takes them to long to get you the money you worked very hard for. For example, I've had one toddler in my care since November 2011, and I have not gotten paid. It is now March 2012. FOUR whole months and I have not received a payment! I have bills to pay, I have to buy food, and maintain my business. I am very sure that the C4K case workers get paid bi-weekly and have benefits. Why can't family child care providers have the same thing? Why is it that when I call C4K they give me the run around? Why do they give the parents the run around? Why has this gone on for so long?

As a collective group, family child care providers who work with C4K, have decided to form a union. We want to fight for what we all believe in. We need the state legislators to hear us, become our partners and to ask these tough questions. As a society we need to change the mentality that child care providers are babysitters. We are not babysitters, we are professionals. We go to school, we get certificates, we get licensed by the state, and we pay business taxes. We should be treated with respect and dignity. Please, state legislators, help us out! We need your help to achieve our goals, and keep our businesses running and open. If it wasn't for C4K providers, I don't know where the children or their parents would be. Help us make change and help society keep running.

Carolyn Thompson
Bridgeport, CT